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ABSTRACT

This study explored the effects of family background variables on coping styles, and the contribution of coping styles and locus of control to the overall adjustment of older adolescents. The objectives of this study were to develop a Canadian adaptation of the Seiffge-Krenke Adolescent Coping Style Scale; to explore the influences of family and personality variables on coping styles; to explore the influences of coping styles on overall adjustment; and to compare the influences of coping styles and locus of control. The subjects were 611 male and female Canadian university students between ages 17 and 18, who were required to complete the coping-styles scale along with other scales, some of which were consolidated into factor scores or averaged z-scores. The results suggest that family background significantly influences adolescents' coping style and that coping style is a substantial contributor to overall adjustment. (MOK)

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FAMILY BACKGROUND, ADOLESCENT COPING STYLES, AND ADJUSTMENT.

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Poster session presented at the 14th Biennial Conference of the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development, Québec City, Canada, 12-16 August, 1996.

ABSTRACT

This study explored the effects of family-background variables on coping styles, and the contribution of coping styles and locus of control to the overall adjustment of older adolescents. Factor analysis of a Canadian adaptation of Seiffge-Krenke's scale of coping styles yielded two strong factors (i.e., Active Coping, Withdrawal Coping) and a weak factor (Internal Coping). A sample of 611 Canadian university students (both genders, 17-18 years) completed the coping-styles scale along with other scales, some of which were consolidated into factor scores or averaged z-scores:
(1) Family Adjustment factor (Olson's Family: Adaptation, Cohesion, Strength, Satisfaction);
(2) Active Family Coping fac. (Ol.'s Social Support, Seeking Help, Spiritual Support);
(3) Ol.'s Reframing scale;
(4) Ol.'s Passive Appraisal sc.;
(5) Turner's Provision of Social Relations sc.;
(6) Emotionality (Eysenck's Neuroticism, Cattell's Anxiety);
(7) Eysenck's Extraversion sc.;
(8) Levenson's Internal Locus of Control;
(9) Le.'s External L. of C. (Chance, Powerful Others);
(10) Adjustment fac. (Self Esteem [Coopersmith, Worchel], Diener's Life Satisfaction, Greenberger's Individual Adequacy, Social Adequacy, Communication, Tyler's Psychosocial Competence).

Family, personality, and social relations were conceptualized as background variables, coping styles and locus of control as mediating variables, and adjustment as an outcome variable. Active Coping Style correlated with Family Adjustment (+.42), Active Family Coping (+.42), Reframing (+.39), Social Relations (+.43), and Adjustment (+.37). Withdrawal Coping correlated with Family Adjustment (-.32), Passive Appraisal (+.43), Emotionality (+.44), External L. of C. (+.46), and Adjustment (-.48). Stepwise regression analyses identified background variables as significant predictors of coping styles: (a) Active Coping (R^2 = .333) with Active Family Coping > Social

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Relations > Family Adjustment; (b) Withdrawal Coping (R^2 = .326) with Passive Appraisal > Emotionality. All mediating variables (- Withdrawal Coping - External L. of C. + Active Coping + Internal L. of C. + Internal Coping) were significant predictors of Adjustment (R^2 = .502). In other regression analyses, the three coping styles (R^2 = .385) and the two locus of control variables (R^2 = .342) accounted for a similar variance in adjustment.

The results suggest that family background significantly influences adolescent's coping style and that coping style is a substantial contributor to overall adjustment.

INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES

(1) To **develop** a Canadian adaptation of the Seiffge-Krenke Adolescent Coping Styles Scale;

(2) To explore the influences of **family** and **personality** variables on coping styles;

(3) To explore the influences of coping styles on overall **adjustment**;

(4) To compare the influences of coping styles and **locus of control**.

BACKGROUND

* Using German samples Inge Seiffge-Krenke developed a research instrument which applied 20 **coping behaviors** to different **problem** areas. Factor analyses of the 20 coping behaviors revealed 3 distinct coping styles: **Active** Coping, **Withdrawal** Coping, and **Internal** Coping.

* **Cross-cultural** studies by Seiffge-Krenke and others revealed that the factor structures of coping styles differed somewhat between German and Israeli samples.

* The present study attempted to develop an adaptation of the coping styles scale which is appropriate for Canadian adolescents.

* There is some preliminary evidence which suggests that an **active** coping style contributes to **good adjustment** and that a **withdrawal** coping style contributes to **poor adjustment**, but that issue requires further clarification.

* The present study conceptualizes family and personality variables as **background** variables, coping style and locus of control as **mediating** variables and adjustment as an **outcome** variable.

* The present study **hypothesizes** that both **family** variables and **personality** variables influence an adolescent's selection of coping style. It is thus predicted that:

(a) a functional **family** background and effective coping by the family is predictive of an adolescent's **active** coping style;

(b) passive coping of the family is predictive of an adolescent's **withdrawal** coping style;

(c) **emotionally** unstable adolescents are expected to select a withdrawal coping style.

* The present study sees the mediating influences of **coping** style (what an adolescent does) to be analogous to that of **locus of control** beliefs (what an adolescent thinks). Thus, both an active coping style and internal locus of control are expected to promote good adjustment and a withdrawal coping style and an external locus of control are expected to promote poor adjustment.

METHOD

SAMPLE

* 611 Introductory Psychology students;

* from various faculties;

* 297 males and 314 females;

* 16 to 19 years;

* in Winnipeg, Canada.

DEVELOPMENT OF A COPING SCALE

* Using a **German** sample I. **Seiffge-Krenke** developed a scale of coping styles: 20 coping behaviors applied to 8 problem areas (studies, teachers, parents, peers, opposite sex, self, future, leisure time). Items had 2 response categories (yes or no).

* E. and S. **Schludermann** adapted the coping styles scale for **Canadian** adolescents: 20 coping behaviors applied to 5 problem areas (academic work, parents and family members, same-sex friends, opposite-sex friends, myself). Items had 5 response categories (almost never to very often).

* Schludermann administered the Canadian version of the coping scale to 611 Canadian older adolescents and subjected the resulting data to **item and factor analyses**.

* The **results** of these analyses suggest the following:
(1) Adolescents tend to use a given coping behavior to a similar extent across different problem areas (average $\underline{r}$ = .50).
(2) When the 20 coping behaviors were factor analyzed separately for the five problem areas, the resulting factor structures were quite similar.
(3) The factor structures of data from male and female adolescents were very similar.
It was therefore appropriate to sum the scores of a given coping behavior across problem areas and to
factor analyze the set of the 20 summary scores.

* The **factor analysis** of the summary scores of the 20 coping behaviors resulted in two strong factors (of eight items each) which were highly replicable across problem areas and genders. One of the factors corresponded to Seiffge-Krenke's **Active Coping** and the other factor corresponded to her **Withdrawal Coping**. There was also a weak factor of 2 items which was less replicable and which somewhat resembled Seiffge-Krenke's **Internal Coping**.

* On the basis of the above factor analyses, Schludermann developed formulas for summing items produce **Active Coping**, **Withdrawal Coping**, and **Internal Coping** scores.

OTHER VARIABLES

In addition to the adapted coping styles scale, the students completed the following scales, some of which were consolidated into **factor scores** or **averaged $\underline{z}$-scores**.

(1) **FAMILY ADJUSTMENT FACTOR**: factor score consolidating
  (a) Fam. Adaptation from Olson's FACES II;
  (b) Fam. Cohesion from Olson's FACES II;
  (c) Olson's Fam. Strength;
  (d) Olson's Fam. Satisfaction.
  scales correlate from .72 to .79

(2) **ACTIVE FAMILY COPING FACTOR**:
  factor score consolidating
  three scales from Olson's Family Coping instrument:
  (a) Acquiring Social Support;
  (b) Mobilizing Family to Acquire and Accept Help;
  (c) Seeking Spiritual Support;
  scales correlate from .37 to .61

(3) **REFRAMING SCALE:**
from Olson's Family Coping instrument.

(4) **PASSIVE APPRAISAL SCALE:**
from Olson's Family Coping instrument.

(5) **TURNER'S PROVISION OF SOCIAL RELATIONS SCALE:**
15 items measuring the amount of social support a person gets.

(6) **EMOTIONALITY VARIABLE:**
av. z-score consolidating
(a) Neuroticism score of Eysenck Personality Questionnaire;
(b) Cattell's Anxiety scale, 12-items shortened version;
scales correlate .76.

(7) **EXTRAVERSION SCALE:**
from Eysenck Personality Questionnaire.

(8) **INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL:**
scale from Levenson's Locus-of-Control Scale.

(9) **EXTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL:**
av. z-score consolidating two scales from Levenson's Locus-of-Control Scale:
(a) Chance scale;
(b) Powerful Others scale.
scales correlate .65.

(10) **ADJUSTMENT FACTOR:**
factor score consolidating:
(a) Self-Esteem variable
(av. z-score consolidating
10-item shortened version of Worchel's Self-Activity Instrument and 12-items shortened version of Coopersmith's Self-Esteem Inventory);
(b) Diener's Satisfaction with Life Scale;
(c) Individual Adequacy Summary of Greenberger's Psychosocial Maturity Inventory;
(d) Social Adequacy Summary of Greenberger's Psychosocial Maturity Inventory;
(e) Good Communication scale of Greenberger's Psychosocial Maturity Inventory;
(f) Psychosocial Competence score of Tyler's Psychosocial Behavioral Attribute Scale.
scales load from .50 to .88 on the first principal-axes factor.

RESULTS

ANALYSES

* **Background** Variables:
Family Adjustment, Active Family Coping, Reframing, Passive Appraisal, Provision of Social Relations, Emotionality, Extraversion.

* **Mediating** Variables:
Active, Withdrawal and Internal Coping; Internal and External Locus of Control.

* **Outcome** Variable:
Adjustment.

* Background and Outcome Variables were **correlated** with Mediating Variables. See Table.

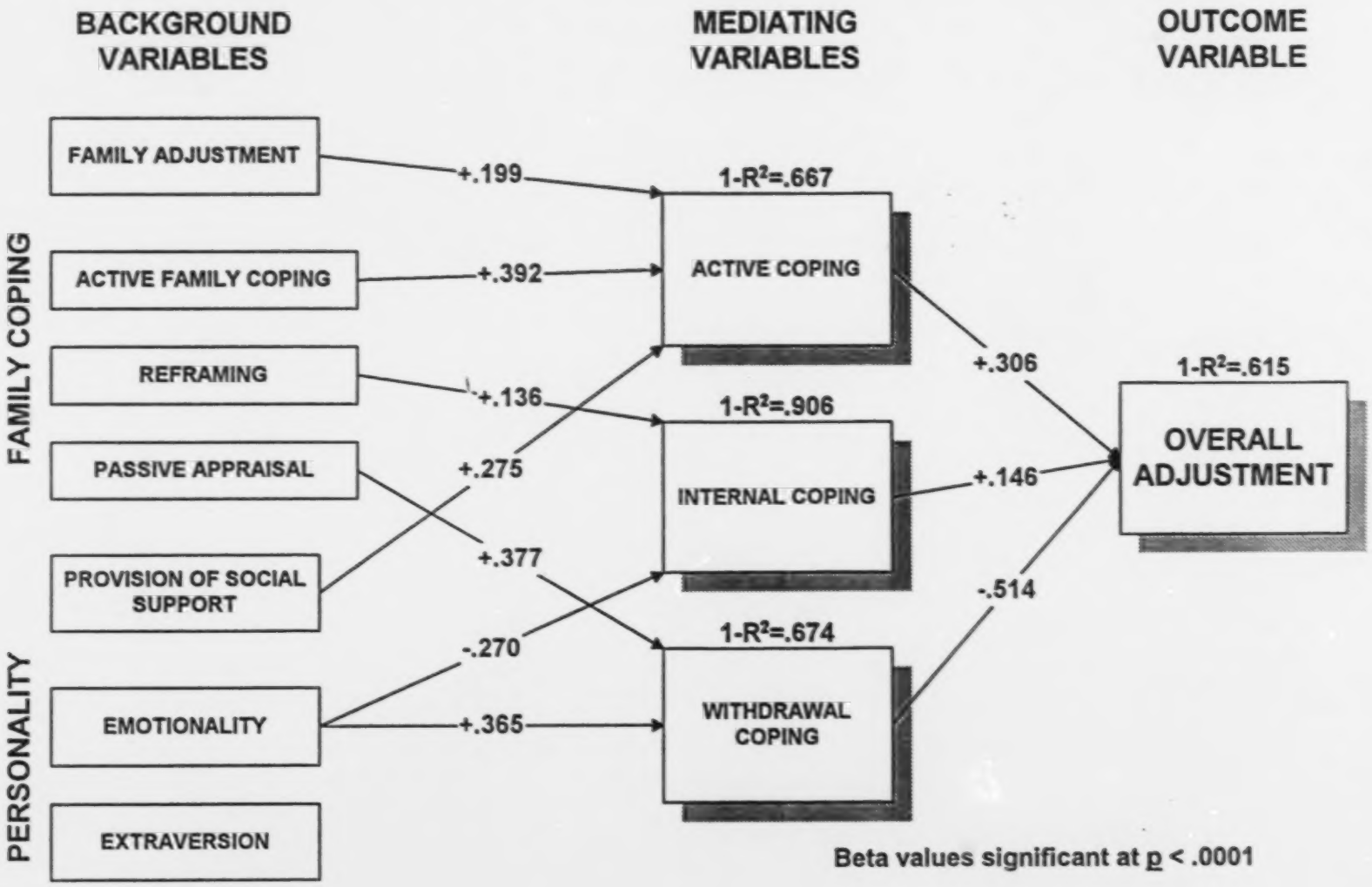
CORRELATIONS

	COPING STYLES			LOC. OF CONTR.	
	ACTIVE	WITHDRAW	INTERNAL	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
FAMILY ADJUST.	+.42	-.32	+.13	+.27	-.23
ACT. FAM COPING	+.42	+.04	+.11	+.12	+.03
RE-FRAMING	+.39	-.17	+.18	+.34	-.15
PASSIVE APPRAIS	-.16	+.47	+.00	-.21	+.43
PROVIS. SOC REL	+.43	-.30	+.19	+.39	-.33
EMOTIO-NALITY	-.06	+.44	-.28	-.14	+.36
EXTRA-VERSION	+.27	-.06	+.12	+.18	-.14
ADJUST-MENT	+.37	-.48	+.14	+.34	-.51

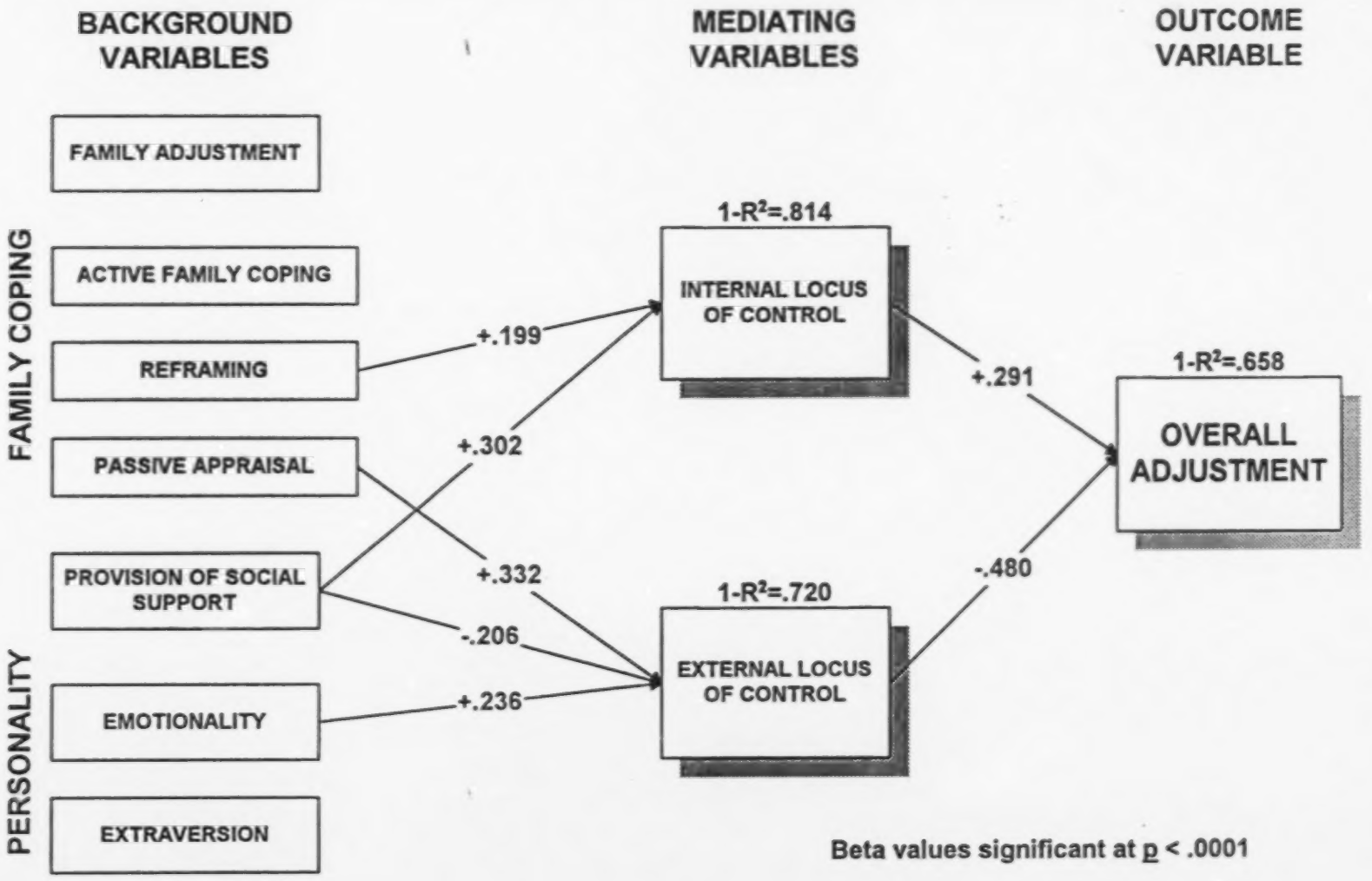
All correlations stronger than +.17 or -.17 are significant at $p < .0001$.

* **Hierarchical regressions** analyses:
(a) with three **coping** styles as mediating variables;
(b) with two **locus-of-control** variables as mediating variables;
(c) with three **coping** styles and two **locus-of-control** variables as mediating variables.
All variables were in standard scores;
Cut-off points for stopping regressions were *F*-values at $p < .0001$.
See Figures.

MODEL WITH COPING STYLES AS MEDIATING VARIABLES

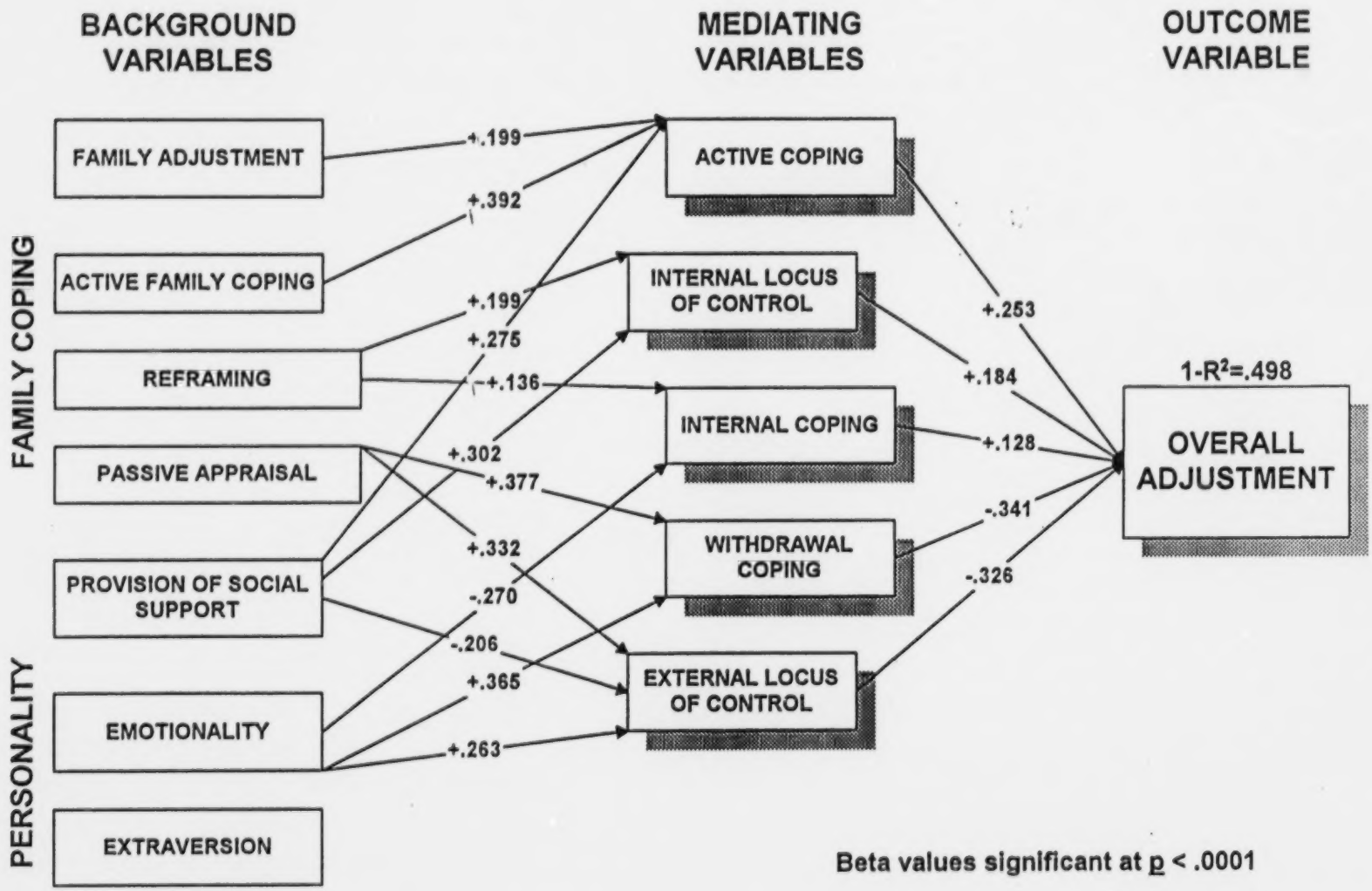


MODEL WITH LOCUS OF CONTROL AS MEDIATING VARIABLES



Beta values significant at $p < .0001$

MODEL WITH COPING STYLES AND LOCUS OF CONTROL AS MEDIATING VARIABLES



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

* Active Coping and Internal Locus of Control are predictive of **good Adjustment**.

* Withdrawal Coping and External Locus of Control are predictive of **poor Adjustment**.

* **Coping** Styles and **Locus of Control** predict Adjustment to the same extent (about a third of variance). When combined, Coping Styles and Locus of Control predict about half of the variance of Adjustment.

* The strongest predictors of **Active Coping** are: Active Family Coping, Provision of Social Support, and Family Adjustment.

* The strongest predictors of **Withdrawal Coping** are Passive Appraisal (family coping) and Emotionality.

CONCLUSIONS

(1) An adolescent's coping style is significantly influenced by the adolescent's **family** background, especially the family's coping pattern.

(2) **Emotionally** unstable adolescents tend to select a withdrawal coping style which in turn tends to lead to poor adjustment.

(3) The results support the view that family background significantly influences an adolescent's coping style and that coping style is a substantial contributor to overall adjustment.